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SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF OLIVER JONES, AND OF HIS
WIFE, REBECCA JONES.

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The following facts regarding the birthplace and kindred of Captain Oliver Jones were obtained from his grand-nephew, David N. Harris, a respected citizen of Wallis, Texas. The other statements are matters of historical record together with treasured recollections of friends of Oliver Jones.

Captain Oliver Jones was born in the city of New York. He had one brother, Benjamin, and two sisters, Mary and Phoebe. The brother, Benjamin, married and had a large family, of which one son, John, continued to live in New York City, and the others all moved to the West and settled in Illinois. Some years before the war between the States, Benjamin Jones made a visit to his brother Oliver at his home in Texas, and upon his return trip to New York, which was to have been made by water from Galveston, he reached the latter place while cholera was prevailing in the city, and is supposed to have died there of that disease, since he was never heard of afterward.

Oliver Jones's sister Mary married David Smith, and their descendants all eventually came to Texas. They had one son and three daughters. Their son, David, moved to New Orleans, married, and had four children; during the war between the States he was lost at sea between New Orleans and New York. One of the daughters, Sarah Smith, married and died without issue; another, Kate, married Dorsey Mason and bore him three sons, all of them dying unmarried except Thomas, who is still living at Galveston. After the death of Mr. Mason, she married Frank Fabj, by whom she had four sons; of these, but two are living, Robert, in Wyoming, and Lee, in Galveston, Texas. The third daughter, Mary, married David Harris, and they had six children, three daughters and three sons, viz.: Phoebe, Mary, and Emma, Joseph, David N., and Oliver Jones. Joseph was among the first to enlist as a Con-

federate soldier at the beginning of the war; he was stationed at Dickinson's Bayou near Galveston, and died six months after his enlistment. There are now but two of this family living, David N. Harris, a merchant at Wallis, Texas, and Oliver Jones Harris, who lives on part of the old Oliver Jones homestead tract in Waller County, Texas.

Phoebe, the other sister of Oliver Jones, was married to Joseph Watts, and their descendants settled in Mississippi and Louisiana, but eventually they all came to Texas to live. One of their daughters, Phoebe, died unmarried, the other, Maggie, made her home for a number of years with her uncle, Oliver, and married Captain T. S. Hammitt; after his death she was married to Jesse O'Brian, of Bellville. She died without issue. After the death of Joseph Watts, his widow contracted a second marriage with a Mr. Froyard. They had two children, sons, William and Hiram. William went to California, and has been lost trace of; Hiram moved to Mississippi and married a Mrs. Newell. Their only son, Oliver Jones Froyard, served with Lee in Virginia during the war between the States, and is now living at Wallis, Texas, with his son Oliver Jones Froyard, Jr.

By this it will be seen that the name Oliver Jones, is treasured by the family, it having been transmitted through three generations as a token of regard for one who might well serve as an exemplar of all that goes to make true manhood.

No record has been preserved by the family of the early life of Oliver Jones, but it is probable that he was in the service of the United States during the war with Great Britain, 1812-14; for in his youth he was made prisoner, and was so disgusted at the indifference of his government in not taking active measures to bring about the release of himself and others that finally, when he was once more at liberty, he vowed never again to live under such a government. He made his way to Mexico, and there met with Stephen F. Austin while the latter was in the City of Mexico working to secure the grant needed to authorize the establishment of his colony in Texas. Jones immediately determined to become one of his colonists; and the records show that on August 10th, 1824, he received title to a *sitio* and *labor* of land, in what are now Brazoria and Austin Counties, receiving his title from Commissioner Baron

de Bastrop. From 1829 to 1830 he was Alguacil, or sheriff, of the Colony. In 1829, as chosen captain of fifty men, he led them from San Felipe de Austin in pursuit of hostile Indians. Captain Bartlett Simms was in command of another company organized for the same purpose, and the two companies under the command of Captain Abner Kuykendall scoured the country from the Brazos to the mouth of the San Saba river.

In 1833 he was a member of the second convention of the people of Texas, which assembled at San Felipe de Austin, on April 1st of that year. Through the memoranda of one of its members, Major James Kerr, a full list of the delegates has been obtained, and among them Oliver Jones is recorded as having been appointed one of a committee to draft a Constitution for the State of Texas, to be forwarded to the Mexican Congress for approval. The futility of this effort to obtain separate statehood for Texas is well known.

The following year, Austin, Oliver Jones, and J. A. Vasquez were elected from Texas to serve in the Legislature of Coahuila and Texas, Texas being allowed three representatives. But, as Austin was then in prison in Mexico, Jones and Vasquez were the only representatives. They were powerless to stem the tide of spoliation and corruption; the revolution in other portions of Mexico spread to Coahuila, and before the end of the session the first steps towards the participation of Texas in the struggle against the arbitrary power of Santa Anna had been taken.

As to the part taken by Oliver Jones, it is well known that he was a warm supporter of the measures advocated by Henry Smith, William B. Travis and others, for creating a local government in Texas, and was a prominent participator in the revolution. In 1837 we find his name among the representatives in the Congress of the Independent Republic of Texas, he having succeeded Mosely Baker, who had removed from Austin County to Harris County. In 1838 when Congress assembled at Houston, his name was registered as Senator from Austin County, succeeding Alexander Somervell. As member of the Senate in this Congress, he had the honor of being appointed chairman of a committee to recommend the design of a flag for the Republic of Texas, and on January 4th, 1839,

he presented the design adopted by the committee accompanying the presentation with the following words:

"The committee beg leave to make some remarks on the ground upon which their conclusion is formed. The President *ad interim* devised the National flag and seal, as it were, in the case of emergency, adopting the flag of the United States of America with little variation, which act was subsequently ratified by the law of December 10th, 1836. The then adopted flag was expedient for the time being, and has been specially beneficial to the navy and merchantmen, on account of being so much blended with the flag of the United States. But the emergency has passed, and the future prospects of Texas are of such a flattering nature that her independence requires that her arms, seal and standard should assume an independent character, by a form which will not blend them with those of any other nation. Besides these considerations, the committee would beg to state that, inasmuch as the proposition made by this republic in her incipient stage of national existence to the United States of America for an annexation to the American Confederacy has been withdrawn by the minister plenipotentiary of the government at the court of Washington, and as the wish of the majority of the people of Texas, so far as is publicly known, is in favor of sustaining an independent station among the nations of the earth, we regard the transaction of the single star into the American constellation and the merging of the single Texan stripes with the thirteen stripes of the United States of America inexpedient.

"The Committee are convinced of the necessity of adopting a separate and distinct standard and arms for the Republic. . . . Therefore, your Committee beg leave to offer a substitute amending the original bill referred to them, accompanying the same with a specimen of the arms, the seal, and the standard."

The National Standard, Seal and Arms, then recommended, which were adopted and finally approved on January 25th, 1839, were used by the Republic of Texas until its annexation to the United States, when slight changes in the lettering were made in the seal and coat of arms, the word "State" being substituted for "Republic." "The State flag is the same as that of the Republic recommended by the Senate committee of which Oliver Jones was

chairman. On February 19th, 1846, it protected the commerce and floated over the capitol of the Republic; on that day it was lowered to give place to the Stars and Stripes.

The presentation of the design for this flag by Oliver Jones was the consummation of the dearest wish of his life, viz.: to see Texas represented among nations by her own symbols of independence. He continued to take a lively interest in the service of the Republic, and in 1845 was enrolled as a member of the Annexation Convention which made Texas a State of the Union. Long after his term of active service had expired, his counsel was valued and sought by those who shaped the policy of the new State.

In person Oliver Jones was pleasing, being tall and erect in figure, of fair complexion, and with regular features. His broad, high forehead betokened intellectuality, while the kindly expression of his eyes tempered the firmness of his lines about the lower part of his face. His character was that of a very kind nature, but of inflexible integrity; all the records or recollections of his life prove his stern determination in the discharge of duty. When running for office he was independent and outspoken as to his opinions; and upon one occasion, when told that his attitude concerning certain questions would not be acceptable to some voters of his district, he sent them word that he would rather not be elected than to go into office by the votes of men who held views so opposed to his own. Mrs. Anson Jones, an old friend of his, tells some touching incidents in illustration of his kindness of heart and generosity of nature. His friendship was of the kind that is not content with spoken proofs, but, wherever possible, resolved itself into action which bore speedy results. On one occasion, at a period of great sorrow and distress in Mrs. Jones's family, when he could not reach them directly on account of swollen streams, he rode on horseback fifty miles around, in order to tender his sympathy and financial help, should she stand in need of such assistance.

Oliver Jones first met his wife at Austin, then the seat of government, in 1840. Her maiden name was Rebecca Greenleaf. She was born at Dorchester, Massachusetts, December, 1798, of a family of seafaring people. She came to Texas in 1834 in company with her first husband, Ira Westover, and their adopted son. Starting from Jeffersonville, Kentucky, they journeyed down the

river to New Orleans on a flat bottomed boat, at that time the only means of river transportation in common use; and from New Orleans they took passage on board a schooner bound for Texas, and settled in the San Patricio Colony. Among the many warm friends of Rebecca Westover, afterwards Mrs. Jones, were David Ayers and his family, who were fellow passengers on the schooner. By reason of storms and adverse winds they were delayed many days beyond the time usually required, and for five days were without the regular supply of provisions and water. The Ayers children received a liberal portion due to Mrs. Westover's family, she, with characteristic kindness, depriving herself that the children might not suffer the pangs of hunger and thirst. The devoted friendship formed during this dangerous voyage lasted through life.

When the Texas Revolution began Captain Ira Westover cast his fortunes with the Texas forces, and he and his adopted son were among Fannin's men at Goliad on that ever memorable bloody Palm Sunday, 1836. Alone, unprotected, terrified at the news of the merciless slaughter, the widow of Captain Westover fled towards the eastern part of the State. Mounted on a faithful horse, with a small bundle of clothing attached to the horn of her saddle, and attended by a single Mexican man-servant, she made her hurried ride across the trackless prairies, from her desolate home at San Patricio to Harrisburg, almost without halting. When she arrived and stopped at the doorway of Mrs. Jane Harris, she was lifted from her horse in a deathlike swoon. It was many hours before she was restored to consciousness, and her first words expressed the joy she felt of being able once more to look upon the face of a white woman. She remained with Mrs. Harris until after the Runaway Scrape, going with her and Mrs. Isaac Batterson's family to Anahuac and afterwards to Galveston.

While her life was beset with many trials, the most trying period was passed in the companionship of Mrs. Harris. When the information reached them at Galveston that the captured Santa Anna, whom she regarded as the murderer of her husband, would not be required to give up his life as the penalty of his crimes, a desire for revenge, for a time, overmastered every other feeling. Even many years afterward when these times were recalled, her strong efforts to speak calmly of them was betrayed by trembling voice and

clenched fingers, as she would exclaim: "If the women whose husbands and sons he murdered could have reached him, he would not have lived long!"

High courage, born of hardships, sustained her; kind friends assisted her; and, returning to San Patricio, she set about gathering together what was left of her former possessions. In time she became the wife of Judge McIntyre, but a tragic fate soon deprived her of his companionship, and she was again left to fight life's battles alone. While engaged in getting out timbers to make improvements on their place, he attempted to cross a swollen stream. The weather was extremely cold, the heavy cloak he wore combined with the force of the current to sweep him off his horse, and he was drowned within a short distance of their home.

In 1840 Mrs. McIntyre went to Austin, then the seat of Government of the Republic of Texas, to present some claims for property destroyed and goods and provisions furnished during the revolution. She boarded with Mrs. Eberle, at whose popular boarding-house most of the members of the Congress were entertained. She there met Captain Oliver Jones, Senator from the Austin District. He immediately became earnestly interested, not only in her claim against the government, but in her own fine personality. With his usual decision of character, he determined at the moment of introduction that he would try to win her, and soon after remarked to a friend: "There is a woman that I would marry!" Aided by his good friend, Anson Jones, and others, in advocating her claim against the government, he was soon equally successful in urging his own individual claim to her favor. They were married at Austin, and after the session of Congress was over, they went to live at his plantation, "Burleigh," in what is now Austin County, a few miles from the town of Bellville. There they passed a long season of contented domestic life, surrounded by such luxuries as were obtainable at the time.

Oliver Jones' experience as a cotton planter dated back to early colonial days; some old accounts of John R. Harris, a merchant at Harrisburg, show the following interesting entry: "Capt. O. Jones to John R. Harris Dr. 1829, March 18. To storage on 2 bales cotton, \$1.00." He was known as a very successful planter, and the hospitality for which Texans were noted was well main-

tained at his home, where he and his wife gladly shared their prosperity with friends and with the stranger within their gates. While they never parted with this home, yet about 1859 they moved to Galveston and purchased a handsome residence, where they lived until the breaking out of the war between the States obliged them, together with most of the residents of Galveston, to refugee to the interior of the State. Thereafter, appreciating in their old age more and more the companionship of dear friends, they spent much of their time in Houston, and Mrs. Jones died in that city, at the residence of Colonel Cornelius Ennis on December 24th, 1865. She and her husband were greatly beloved by all this family, whose younger members, in common with a few others of old friends, showed their love by endearing titles of make-believe kinship; addressing them always as "Uncle," and "Aunt Jones." Their devotion to each other was of a type seldom equalled—never surpassed. Each lived for the other, and both for their friends. This excellent pair, without children, by the charm of their friendliness, were made members of a family circle limited only by the number of children of their friends.

Mrs. Jones was well educated; she was gentle and dignified in manner, tall and well formed, attractive in person, and gifted with fine conversational powers. The courage and fortitude displayed during the perilous period of her first years in Texas flashed through her black eyes and were traced in the firm lines which marked the features of an unusually pleasing face. Those who knew her well had only words of praise and love for this worthy com-patriot, a woman cast in heroic mould. She was a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and at her death was buried in the cemetery of that church, now known as the old Episcopal and Masonic cemetery.

Oliver Jones survived his devoted wife less than one year. On September 17th, 1866, at the residence of Mrs. Sarah Merriweather, on Congress Street, Houston, Texas, he breathed his last, and was laid by the side of his wife. A graceful, Italian monolith, tall and stately, bearing a simple inscription, the name of Oliver Jones, place of birth, date of death, and a partial record of his noble service for Texas, and the name Rebecca Jones, with the date

of her death, marks the place of their sepulture.¹ Honeysuckle clusters in wild profusion round the tombstones of this old-time cemetery, which lies close to the Sam Houston Park; the merry sounds of music and laughter from the latter contrasting strangely with the peaceful quiet of this resting place of the dead.

¹When, a few years ago, the Historian of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas informed Mr. David N. Harris of Wallis, that the memorial erected to his grand-uncle in the old Episcopal and Masonic Cemetery was falling to decay, he immediately authorized its restoration at his expense. At that time, at the instance of the Historian of the Society mentioned above, a brief record of Oliver Jones' service to Texas was added to the inscription already existing. An error in the inscription gives the place of his birth as Connecticut, when, according to the most reliable information, it should have been New York City.